

# **UNCOMPAHGRE PLANNING AREA WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS INVENTORY: 2011 UPDATE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

As part of the land use planning process for the Uncompahgre Resource Management Plan (RMP), the BLM assessed public lands within the Uncompahgre RMP Planning Area (planning area) to determine whether wilderness characteristics are present outside of designated wilderness, existing wilderness study areas (WSAs), and the congressionally-designated Tabeguache Area. The BLM reviewed original 1980 wilderness inventories, as well as lands proposed by BLM staff and the public, in order to identify lands with potential wilderness characteristics.

Of the six areas identified through the review, five were found to possess wilderness characteristics. The BLM developed a range of RMP alternatives and analyzed impacts associated with the various management prescriptions designed to protect these characteristics. Decisions could protect all, some (including portions of some), or none of the identified lands.

### **BLM Authority and the Land Use Planning Process**

Land use plans identify broad-scale decisions to guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions. The BLM Land Use Planning Handbook (1601-1) provides guidance to BLM employees for implementing BLM land use planning requirements. In addition, Appendix C, Section I.K of BLM Handbook 1610-1 (Wilderness Characteristics) directs BLM field offices to identify decisions to protect or preserve wilderness characteristics (including sufficient size, naturalness, and outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation). Specific guidance for assessing wilderness characteristics is provided through Washington Office Instructional Memorandum 2011-154.

While BLM authority to conduct wilderness reviews and establish new wilderness study areas under FLPMA Section 603 expired in 1993, the BLM has authority under FLPMA sections 102 and 201 to maintain a current inventory of all public lands and their resources, including wilderness characteristics. Through the land use planning process, the BLM must consider all

available information to determine the mix of resource use and protection that best serves the FLPMA multiple-use mandate.

The management of areas found to possess wilderness characteristics is addressed through the development of a range of RMP alternatives. Within each alternative, the BLM identifies appropriate portions of land and develops effective management strategies (including management prescriptions, stipulations, and allowable uses).

The five existing WSAs within the planning area will continue to be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics under the BLM Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review (H-8550-1) until Congress designates them as wilderness or releases them for other uses.

### **Scope of Assessment**

The BLM considered and evaluated wilderness characteristics for all BLM lands within the planning area outside of existing WSAs and the Tabeguache Area. The assessment did not include national forest lands or BLM lands within the Gunnison Gorge or Dominguez-Escalante national conservation areas.

FLPMA requires that the BLM maintain a current inventory of conditions and resources on public lands, including wilderness characteristics. The last inventory of wilderness characteristics was completed more than thirty years prior to this RMP revision. This update of the UFO wilderness characteristics inventory takes into consideration the possibility that conditions on the ground may have changed during this interval.

In performing this assessment, the UFO:

- 1) Reviewed the 1980 BLM Intensive Wilderness Inventory and updated information when necessary to ensure that information was current and accurate.
- 2) Reviewed proposals to inventory and protect BLM lands with wilderness characteristics submitted by BLM staff and the public.
- 3) Assessed potential lands in the planning area identified through BLM staff and public wilderness proposals or acquired since the 1980 inventory.

### **WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS**

BLM Manual 6300-1 defines wilderness characteristics as consisting of: 1) sufficient size, 2) naturalness, 3) outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, and 4) supplemental values. To have wilderness characteristics, an area must meet each of the first three criteria as described below.

#### **Sufficient Size**

The area is roadless and has over 5,000 acres of contiguous BLM lands, or is of sufficient size to make practicable its use in an unimpaired condition. Areas adjacent to wilderness areas or WSAs that are less than 5,000 acres may have wilderness characteristics. State or private lands are not included in making this acreage determination.

### **Roadless Definitions**

For purposes of conducting wilderness characteristics inventories, the BLM uses definitions found on page 17 of House Report 94-1163 (May 15, 1976), released prior to the enactment of FLPMA. In the report, roadless refers to:

...the absence of roads which have been improved and maintained by mechanical means to insure relatively regular and continuous use. A way maintained solely by the passage of vehicles does not constitute a road.

The BLM adopted the following sub-definitions of words and phrases related to roads:

- Improved and maintained: Actions taken physically by people to keep the road open to vehicle traffic. "Improved" does not necessarily mean formal construction. "Maintained" does not necessarily mean annual maintenance.
- Mechanical means: Use of hand or power machinery or tools.
- Relatively regular and continuous use: Vehicular use that has occurred and will continue to occur on a relatively regular basis. Examples are: access roads for equipment to maintain a stock water tank or other established water sources, which may entail lengthy return intervals for this purpose; access roads to maintained recreation sites or facilities; or access roads to mining claims.

A route established or maintained solely by the passage of vehicles would not be considered a road, even if it is used on a relatively regular and continuous basis. Vehicle routes constructed by mechanical means but that are no longer being maintained by mechanical methods are not roads. Sole use of hands and feet to move rocks or dirt without the use of tools or machinery does not meet the definition of "mechanical means." Roads need not be "maintained" on a regular basis but rather "maintained" when road conditions warrant actions to keep it in a usable condition. A dead-end (cherry-stem) road can form the boundary of an inventory area and does not by itself disqualify an area from being considered "roadless."

### **Naturalness**

Lands and resources exhibit a high degree of naturalness when affected primarily by the forces of nature and where the imprint of human activity is substantially unnoticeable (BLM IM 2003-275).

The naturalness of an area may be influenced by the presence or absence of roads and trails, fences or other developments; the nature and extent of landscape modifications; the presence of native vegetation communities; and the connectivity of habitats. The presence and diversity of wildlife species are recognized as an indicator of naturalness.

Examples of human-made features that may be considered substantially unnoticeable in certain cases are: trails, trail signs, bridges, fire towers, fire breaks, fire pre-suppression facilities, pit toilets, fisheries enhancement facilities, fire rings, hitching posts, snow gauges, water quantity and quality measuring devices, research monitoring markers and devices, radio repeater sites, air quality monitoring devices, fencing, spring developments, overgrown and barely visible two-track ways, and small reservoirs.

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## **Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude or a Primitive and Unconfined Type of Recreation**

### ***Solitude***

Visitors may have outstanding opportunities for solitude when the sights, sounds, and evidence of other people are rare or infrequent, or where visitors can feel isolated, alone or secluded from others.

### ***Primitive and Unconfined Recreation***

Visitors may have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation where the use of the area is through non-motorized, non-mechanical means, and where no or minimal developed recreation facilities are encountered.

### **Supplemental Values**

The area may contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Supplemental values may be present within the inventory units but are not a required component of wilderness character; they will be described but not used as a mechanism to impact a final finding.

## **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

In accordance with BLM policy outlined in IM-2011-154, the BLM assessment team:

- Analyzed GIS data to identify blocks of BLM land (1) greater than 5,000 acres or adjacent to a WSA, designated wilderness, or the Tabeguache Area and (2) that do not contain improved and maintained BLM roads, county roads, or highways (wilderness inventory roads).
- Assessed BLM 2009 one-meter aerial imagery to eliminate blocks of land that clearly lack wilderness characteristics of naturalness. The most common features indicating a lack of naturalness included obvious vegetative manipulations (such as chaining and rollerchopping) and distinct roads, dams, ditches, seismic exploration lines, and contour furrows.
- Consulted with field staff familiar with assessment areas to elicit additional information and substantiate findings regarding areas eliminated from consideration.
- Conducted field visits in order to verify preliminary findings and complete inventories for qualifying areas.

### **Assessment Tools**

The BLM assessment team utilized the following tools in evaluating areas for consideration and in completing the wilderness characteristics assessment:

### ***Past Wilderness Inventories***

The BLM reviewed the 1980 BLM Intensive Wilderness Inventory, Final Wilderness Study Areas report and maps for areas that had been assessed for the presence of wilderness characteristics, but were not included within a WSA. Because the original report documentation was not

available, all aspects of an area were considered in this assessment, making it more comprehensive than a simple update.

This review enabled the BLM to determine whether any new information is available that was not considered as part of the original inventories. As the larger landscape experiences population growth and increased development, perceptions regarding what constitutes solitude and outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation change. Interest in arid and low elevation environments has also increased. Therefore, some information related to social values submitted by the public was considered “new information” based on changed physical conditions of the land and social perceptions of wilderness characteristics that may have occurred over time.

### ***Public Wilderness Proposals***

External groups advocate for wilderness designation through legislation and participation in the land use planning process. The BLM considered (in 2010) the most recent proposal for protection of wilderness characteristics submitted by the Colorado Wilderness Network. This coalition is made up of national and statewide organizations (including the Colorado Environmental Coalition, Colorado Mountain Club, Environment Colorado, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, and Western Colorado Congress), as well as local citizens groups (including the Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition, High Country Citizens Alliance, Ridgway-Ouray Community Council, San Juan Citizens Alliance, Sheep Mountain Alliance, Wild Connections, and Wilderness Workshop).

### ***Other Documents and Data***

The following information sources were considered in drafting the assessment:

- Field investigation notes
- Range improvement records (UFO Range Management Specialist and GIS)
- Colorado Natural Heritage Program databases (including potential conservation areas, rare plants, natural plant communities, raptors, and bats)
- Colorado Wilderness Network proposed wilderness GIS data layer (2007)
- BLM LR2000 databases (including rights-of-way, mining claims, and oil and gas leasing)
- Dry Creek Travel Management Plan (2009)
- UFO Travel Management Plan (2010)
- UFO road maintenance records
- UFO range allotment management records
- UFO cultural database
- UFO oil and gas lease GIS data sets
- UFO travel and transportation GIS data sets

## ASSESSMENT AREAS

The wilderness characteristics assessment describes known valid existing rights, grandfathered uses, and public land investments within the survey areas. BLM staff verified new information during field surveys.

**Table 1** on page 6 identifies the planning area lands detailed within this assessment.

**Table 1**  
**Planning Area Lands Assessed for Wilderness Characteristics**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Total Inventoried Acreage*</b>	<b>Acreage with Wilderness Characteristics</b>	<b>Acreage without Wilderness Characteristics</b>
Camel Back WSA Addition	8,700	6,950	1,750
Dolores River Canyon WSA Addition	3,750	550	3,200
Dry Creek Basin	7,040	7,040	0
Roc Creek	7,650	5,480	2,170
Shavano Creek	6,100	4,900	1,200
Norwood Canyon	5,600	0	5,600

\*Reflects total BLM acreage within the planning area submitted by the Colorado Wilderness Network, including acreage within existing WSAs. Acreages generated through GIS mapping may vary due to rounding inconsistencies and different mapping techniques.



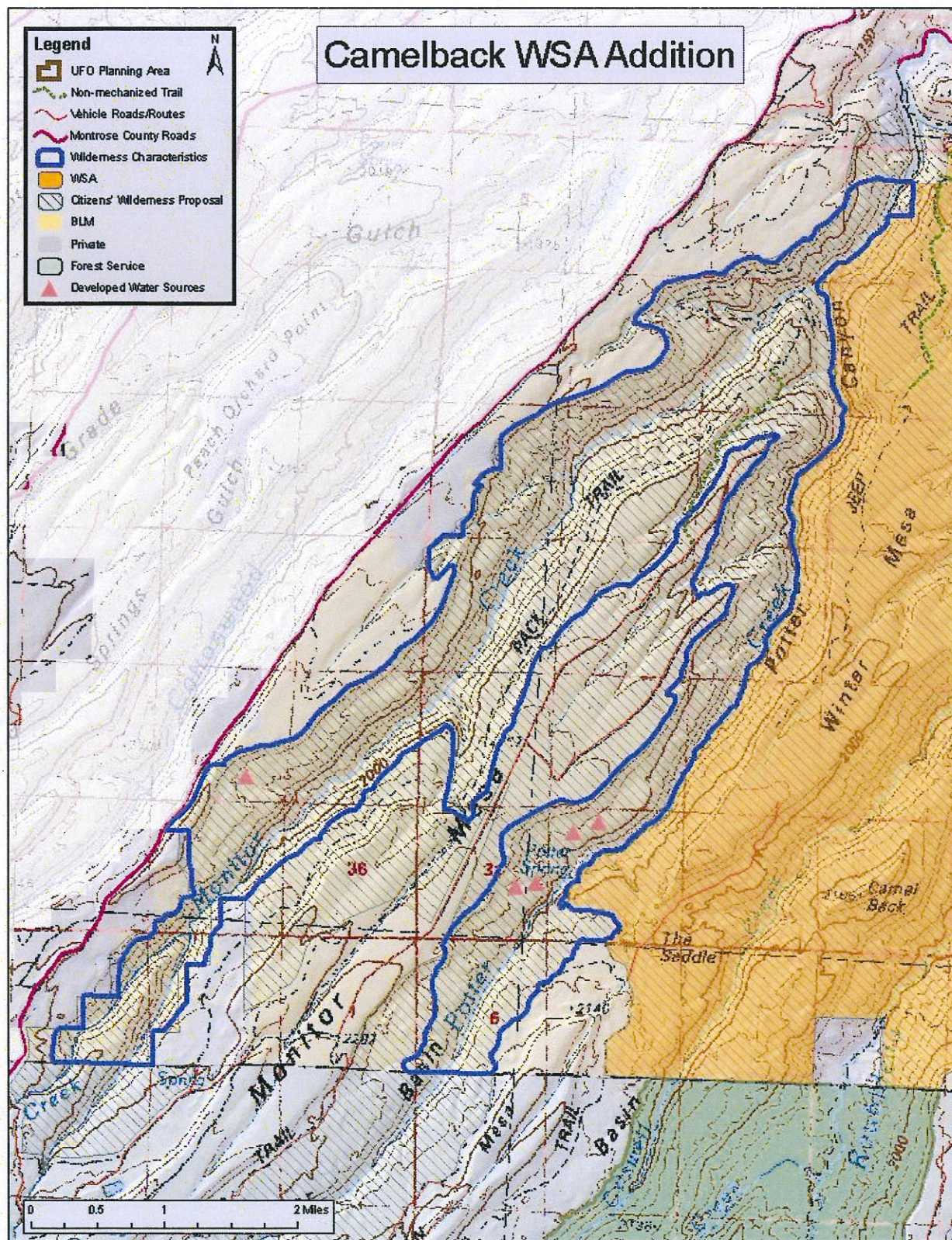


Figure I - Camel Back WSA Addition



## CAMEL BACK WSA ADDITION

### Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

**Area Unique Identifier:** Camel Back WSA Addition

**Acreage:** 8,700 (includes BLM lands in the Colorado Wilderness Network proposal, exclusive of Camel Back WSA)

**(1) Is the area of sufficient size?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

### Description

This unit is contiguous with Camel Back WSA.

The Colorado Wilderness Network proposal includes all BLM lands of Monitor Canyon from rim to rim, most of the BLM lands on Monitor Mesa, except for an area on the south end of the mesa. Also included is Potter Canyon from the WSA boundary on the east, up to the west rim of the canyon formed by Monitor Mesa. The unit is bounded on the north by private land and on the south by US Forest Service land.

**(2) Does the area appear to be natural?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

### Description

Most of Monitor Mesa shows substantial evidence of human modification. In addition to constructed and maintained routes that run the length of the mesa top, nearly all of the mesa top has undergone mechanical vegetative treatments (e.g., chaining, roller-chopping) that are obvious to a casual observer. For this reason, 1,750 acres of Monitor Mesa has been excluded from the unit.

This leaves 6,950 acres, which include BLM lands in Monitor Canyon from rim to rim, and Potter Canyon from its west rim to the Camel Back WSA boundary in the bottom of Potter Canyon. The unit is bounded on the north by a road and private land and on the south by US Forest Service lands.

Both Monitor and Potter canyons (exclusive of the top of Monitor Mesa) possess a high degree of naturalness. The Camel Back WSA boundary in Potter canyon is defined by an old, impassable vehicle route that runs up the bottom of the canyon. The route was still in use when the WSA was established, but has long since fallen into disuse, and was closed by BLM's Dry Creek Transportation Plan (2009). It is no longer passable for any type of vehicle, and occasional flooding in Potter Creek together with growth of riparian vegetation is reclaiming the old route. While a person on the ground could still find evidence of the old road it is substantially unnoticeable in the unit as a whole. From the WSA boundary in the bottom of Potter Creek up to the west rim of Potter Canyon the terrain is rugged and steep with rocky



outcrops and ledges. Potter Creek has perennial flows. There are four small stock ponds on a bench about halfway up the slope, but they do not significantly detract from the overall naturalness.

The unit includes all BLM lands in Monitor Canyon from rim to rim. It is characterized by steep, broken cliffs and ledges with a perennial stream in the bottom. An old abandoned mineral exploration route exists in a side-drainage on the northwest side of the canyon. Though it was originally constructed, there has been no maintenance or vehicle use on the route for many years, and it is slowly weathering away. It is somewhat noticeable from certain vantage points, but does not dominate the setting. There is one small stock pond on the southwest bench of the canyon that is occasionally maintained via a short ATV access trail. The trail is open to administrative use, but closed to public use. The canyon as a whole is predominately natural appearing.

A stock trail runs from near the confluence of Monitor and Potter Creeks up the northern ridge of Monitor Mesa and onto the mesa. The portion of the trail ascending the steeper, rocky layers was originally built with mechanized equipment, likely a bulldozer. This trail is actively used by the grazing permittee, but only for driving cattle, which is accomplished on horseback. The trail is regularly maintained with hand tools to ensure its continued use. It's clearly visible from certain vantage points, but since it is a local, linear feature (as opposed to a broad area) it does not dominate the scene, and does not detract from the overall naturalness of the unit.

**(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

#### **Description**

With the high topographic relief, rugged terrain and lack of vehicular access outstanding opportunities for solitude exist in this unit. In the canyon bottoms, where most hiking and equestrian use occurs, the riparian vegetation provides excellent visual and aural screening.

Recreational use is mostly light in this unit, with an increase in use during the hunting season. With light use and ample size, one mostly feels alone on a large landscape. Contacts with other visitors are rare.

The closest major metropolitan area is Denver, CO, approximately 275 miles distant (by car). Grand Junction, CO (pop. 60,000) is 40 miles distant. Montrose, Delta, and Olathe are all within 20 miles of the unit and have a combined population of approximately 25,000.

The unit is approximately 10 miles from the Delta County airport, and 18 miles from the Montrose airport (measured to the nearest point). Montrose airport is the busiest airport in the area with several commercial jet flights arriving and departing each day during the busy season. The busy season is primarily the ski season in Telluride, which extends from November through April in a typical year. Typical flight paths in and out of local airports do not pass over this unit, so impacts from low-flying aircraft are not common.

**(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?**

Yes ☒No ☐N/A ☐**Description**

All recreational use of the area is non-motorized and non-mechanized. Primary activities are backpacking, day hiking, equestrian use, and hunting. There are few trails, and no recreational facilities in the area. All use is self-directed and requires basic backcountry travel and map-reading or GPS skills.

**(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value)?**

Yes ☒No ☐N/A ☐**Description**

Monitor Creek contains areas of Fremont cottonwood/skunkbush sumac riparian woodland (*Populus deltoides* spp. *Wislizeni/Rhus trilobata*) which is classified as globally imperiled by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). It also contains a superior (A-ranked) occurrence of the common coyote willow riparian shrubland (*Salix exigua*/mesic graminoids).

It also provides habitat connectivity between the higher elevation forested lands on the Uncompahgre Plateau to the lower elevation desert scrub lands at the lower end of the unit. This is important especially for seasonal wildlife migrations.

**SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS\*****Area Unique Identifier:** Camel Back WSA Addition**Results of analysis:**

Of the 8,700 acres analyzed, 6,950 acres have wilderness characteristics.

Most of Monitor Mesa shows substantial evidence of human modification. In addition to constructed and maintained routes that run the length of the mesa top, nearly all of the mesa top has undergone mechanical vegetative treatments (e.g., chaining, roller-chopping) that are obvious to a casual observer. For this reason, most of Monitor Mesa has been excluded from the unit.

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Check one:

☒ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as lands with wilderness characteristics.

☐ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

**Prepared by (team members):**

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**(Name, Title, Date)****Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):**Name: Barbara Sharrow Title: Field ManagerDate: Nov. 4, 2011

\*This form documents information that constitutes an inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR parts 4 or 1610.5-3.



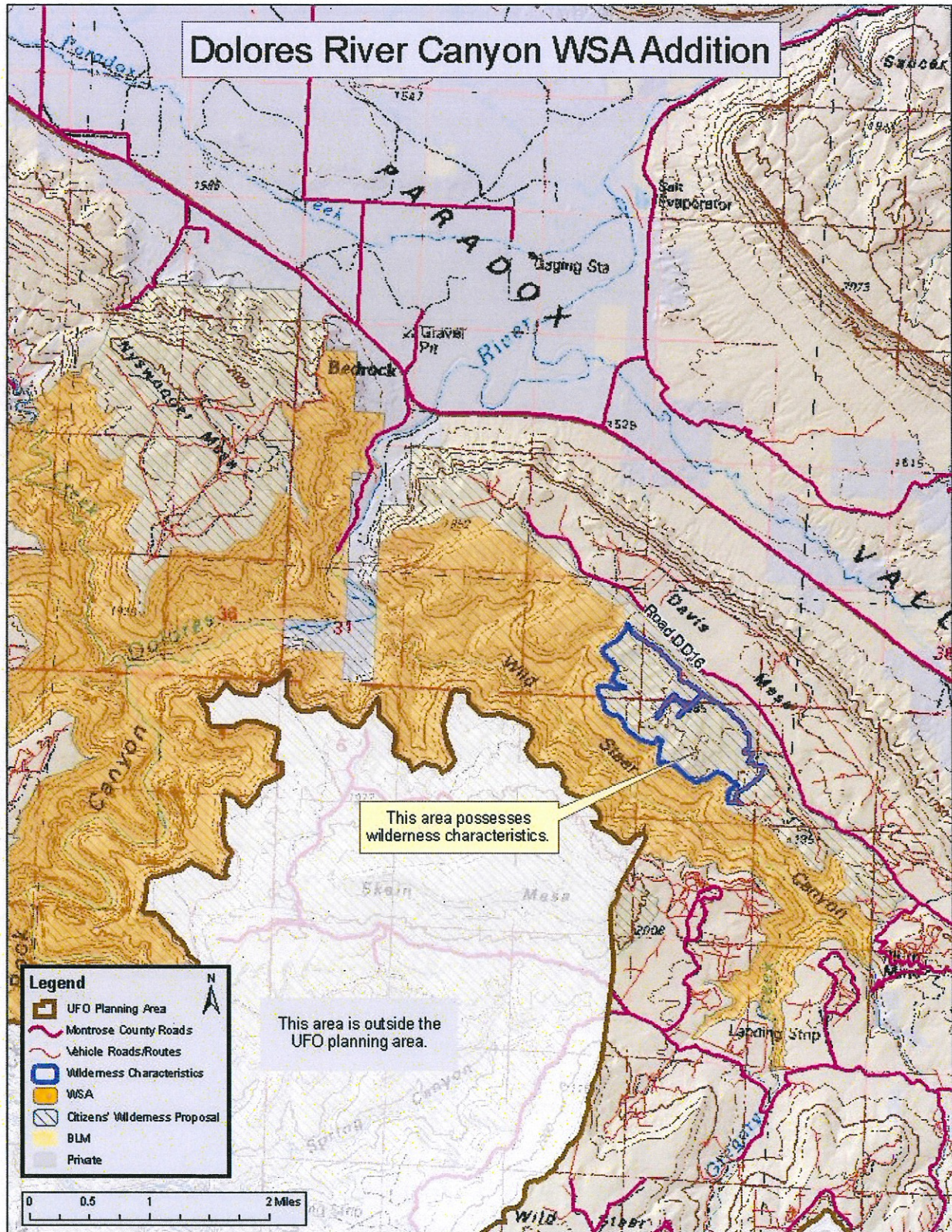


Figure 2 - Dolores River Canyon WSA Addition



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**DOLORES RIVER CANYON WSA ADDITION****Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics****Area Unique Identifier:** Dolores River Canyon WSA Addition**Acreage:** 3,750**(1) Is the area of sufficient size?**Yes ☒No ☐**Description**

Unit is adjacent to the Dolores River Canyon WSA.

**(2) Does the area appear to be natural?**Yes ☒No ☐N/A ☐**Description**

Some lands within the unit on Davis Mesa between the WSA boundary on the northeast side of Wild Steer Canyon and Montrose County Road DD16 are natural in appearance with few signs of human-caused alterations to the natural landscape.

**(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?**Yes ☐No ☒N/A ☐**Description**

Of the remaining area of the unit that possesses naturalness, much is located between road DD16 and the rim above the road on its southwest side. This area is a narrow strip of land and close to the county road. This strip varies from 0.10 to 0.25 miles in width, with the bulk of the unit overlooking the county road. Opportunities for solitude are poor in most of this area.

A 550-acre bench (shown on the attached map inside the blue outline) has opportunities for solitude because most of that area is below and out of direct line of sight of vehicle routes. However since most of the area is within 0.5 miles of the vehicle routes, the opportunities are not outstanding.

**(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?**Yes ☒No ☐N/A ☐



**Description**

A 550-acre bench (shown on the attached map inside the blue outline) has opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation because most of that area is below and out of direct line of sight of vehicle routes. The opportunities would be outstanding in connection with the existing WSA.

All travel in this area is by non-motorized/non-mechanized means.

The area has no developed recreation facilities.

Since it is adjacent to the Dolores River Canyon WSA a dominant impression of an observer is that it is part of a great expanse of wild country. In particular, the view from the edge of this area overlooking Wild Steer Canyon is wild and dramatic. A person with proper gear and primitive outdoor travel skills would feel compelled to explore this area and continue into the WSA.

**(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value)?**

Yes ☐

No ☒

N/A ☐

**Description**

None provided.

## SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS\*

**Area Unique Identifier:** Dolores River Canyon WSA Addition

### Results of analysis:

Much of the originally proposed unit lacks naturalness, and/or outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation, or possesses a combination of deficiencies.

Nyswonger Mesa has a high density of old vehicle routes and linear surface disturbances. None of the routes have been maintained for many years and have fallen into disuse. They are not "roads" as defined in this wilderness characteristics inventory process. They are however wide-spread and substantially noticeable human-made (unnatural) modifications to the land. Nyswonger Mesa does not possess naturalness, and therefore does not possess wilderness characteristics.

Much of Davis Mesa, northwest of Wild Steer Canyon, has similar deficiencies preventing it from possessing wilderness characteristics. The north end of Davis Mesa (outside the WSA) has a two vehicle routes in a fairly constrained area, and therefore does not possess naturalness. The southeast end of the proposed unit on Davis Mesa also has a density of vehicle routes that precludes naturalness.

Also on Davis Mesa there are long narrow strips of land in the Colorado Wilderness Network proposal between Montrose County Road DD16 and the WSA boundary. Because these lands are topographically isolated between the cliff line of the WSA and the county road, they do not possess outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

One 550-acre unit was found that is adjacent to the WSA that possesses wilderness characteristics. The unit is bounded as follows:

- By unnamed BLM roads on the northeast and southeast; and
- By the WSA on the northwest and southwest.
- It is found in parts of the sections listed in the following townships;
  - 46N 18W, Sec 2, 3, and 4
  - 47N 18W, Sec 33 and 34

There is just over a half mile of road that extends in a forked prong into the unit. It has been cherry-stemmed out of the unit. See attached map.

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ N/A

**Check one:**

The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as lands with wilderness characteristics.



The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

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Barbara Sharrow

Title:

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Date:

Nov 4, 2011

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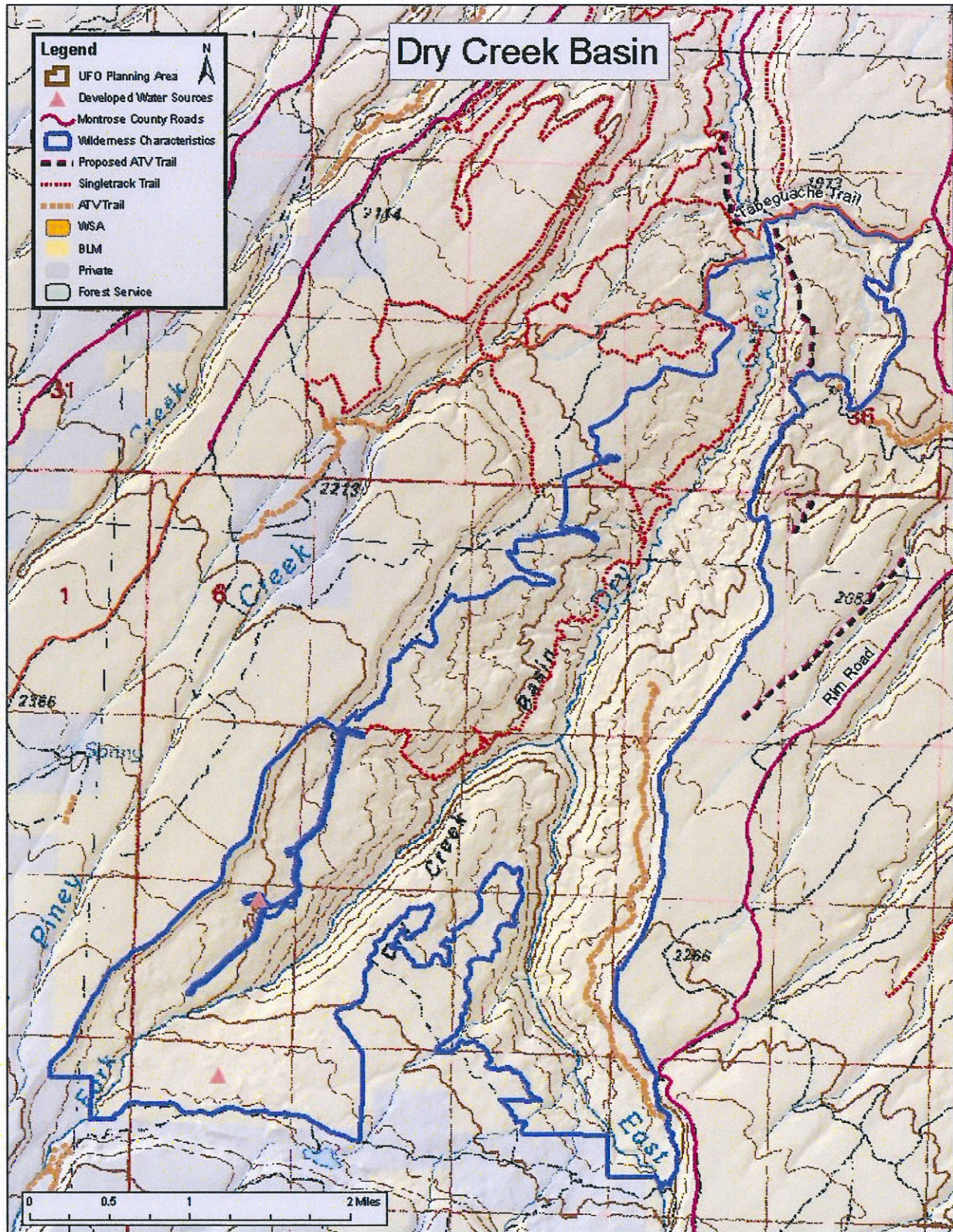


Figure 3 - Dry Creek Basin



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**DRY CREEK BASIN****Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics****Area Unique Identifier:** Dry Creek Basin**Acreage:** 7,040

**(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception in the space provided below):**

**Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

**Description**

Unit is bounded as follows:

- On the north by the Tabeguache Trail;
- On the west by vehicle routes, numerous check-dams, vegetative manipulations (chaining/roller-chopping), and (at the southern end of the western boundary) the upper rim of Dry Creek Basin;
- On the south by Olathe Reservoir Road and vegetative manipulations (chaining/roller-chopping); and
- On the east by vehicle routes and the upper rim of Dry Creek Basin.

In the southwest portion of the unit a constructed and maintained road extends into the unit for about 2 miles and terminates. This road is used to access a range development (trough) and is also used seasonally by hunters. The route is designated open in the Dry Creek Transportation Plan (2009). The route is cherry-stemmed out of the unit.

**(2) Does the area appear to be natural?**

**Yes** ☒ **No** ☐ **N/A** ☐

**Description**

The unit is natural in appearance overall with few signs of human alteration.

The unit is comprised primarily of the drainages of the East and West forks of Dry Creek, and Dry Creek itself, below their confluence.

The unit takes in elevations of 8,000 feet on the higher southern end, and drops to 6,000 at the lower end of the creek to the north. The south portion supports ponderosa pine forest and mountain shrub lands on the benches above the creeks. The creeks themselves are perennial and support lush riparian vegetation of cottonwood, skunkbush, and willow. As the elevation descends toward the north the benches above the creek give way to pinyon-juniper forest, sagebrush flats and desert scrub, while the riparian zone associated with Dry Creek continues to be dominated by cottonwood trees.



Because this is a relatively undisturbed and natural landscape connecting higher elevation forest with more desert-like lowlands, this unit is an important wildlife migration corridor.

There is a 3-mile ATV trail on the bench on the east side of the East Fork of Dry Creek. There are also about 5 miles of motorized single-track trails on the bench on the west side of Dry Creek. These routes are maintained open routes and are clearly visible as such for an observer following them. Because the tread is narrow (particularly on the single-track) and the vehicles using them are relatively light, they are not substantially noticeable in the unit as a whole.

There is one small spring development near the southwest boundary of the unit.

**(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

### **Description**

The unit has moderately rugged topography. The incised creek bottoms are the most topographically isolated areas of the unit. Good vegetative screening exists in all of the riparian zone, and the pinyon-juniper and ponderosa pine uplands.

There is motorized and mechanized access into the unit. A 3-mile ATV trail runs along the bench above the East Fork of Dry Creek, and is used primarily for seasonal hunting activities. During hunting season use is moderate to heavy.

A 2-mile road spur is cherry-stemmed out of the unit on the west bench above West Fork of Dry Creek. While this road is excluded from the unit it could negatively affect perceptions of solitude for the adjacent lands within the unit. The road accesses a developed spring and trough, and provides full-size vehicle access to the area. The road is primarily used for grazing allotment management and for seasonal hunting access. During hunting season, use is moderate, and is lightly used outside the hunting season.

About 5 miles of motorized single-track trail exists on the west bench of Dry Creek, mostly on the northern half of the unit. This is primarily used for recreational trail riding in the spring and fall. Motorized and mechanized use of these trails is moderate in spring and fall, and light in summer and winter.

The vehicle routes mentioned above would have a localized negative effect on perceptions of solitude during their primary seasons of use, but those effects would not be enough to preclude outstanding opportunities for solitude throughout most of the unit.

The size of the unit and vegetative and topographic screening provide outstanding opportunities for solitude. The whole unit is within a basin defined by the upper rim of the canyon formed by Dry Creek, and is therefore isolated from the surrounding lands, which are laced with vehicle routes.

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**(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?**

Yes ☒No ☐N/A ☐**Description**

The unit is well-suited for self-directed hiking, horseback use, and non-motorized/non-mechanized hunting use.

Despite the vehicle routes mentioned in section 3 (above) access to the vast majority of the unit is only by foot or horseback. The entire riparian zone up the main stem and both forks of Dry Creek is only accessible by foot or horse back.

Except for trails, no developed recreation facilities exist in this unit.

**(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value)?**

Yes ☒No ☐N/A ☐**Description**

This area provides important wildlife habitat connectivity between the higher elevation forested lands on the Uncompahgre Plateau at the south end of the unit and the lower elevation lands to the north.

**SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS\*****Area Unique Identifier:** Dry Creek Basin**Results of analysis:**

This unit was identified by BLM through a review and update of the UFO wilderness characteristics inventory as required by FLPMA Sec 201. It was not submitted by external groups.

The singletrack motorized trails and ATV trail within the unit are currently at a low level of use that is consistent with the findings of naturalness, and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. The Dry Creek Transportation Plan (2009) designated both routes. (Note: There is one proposed ATV route that, if constructed, would cross the unit on its northern end. See attached map. This route is included in the Dry Creek Transportation Plan.)

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

**Check one:**

- ☒ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as lands with wilderness characteristics.
- ☐ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

**Prepared by (team members):**

Edd Franz, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner  
 Lynae Rogers, BLM Range Management Specialist  
 Debbie Burch, BLM Range Technician  
 Barbara Sharrow, BLM Uncompahgre Field Office Manager  
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**(Name, Title, Date)****Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):**

Name: Barbara Sharrow Title: Field Manager

Date: Nov 4, 2011

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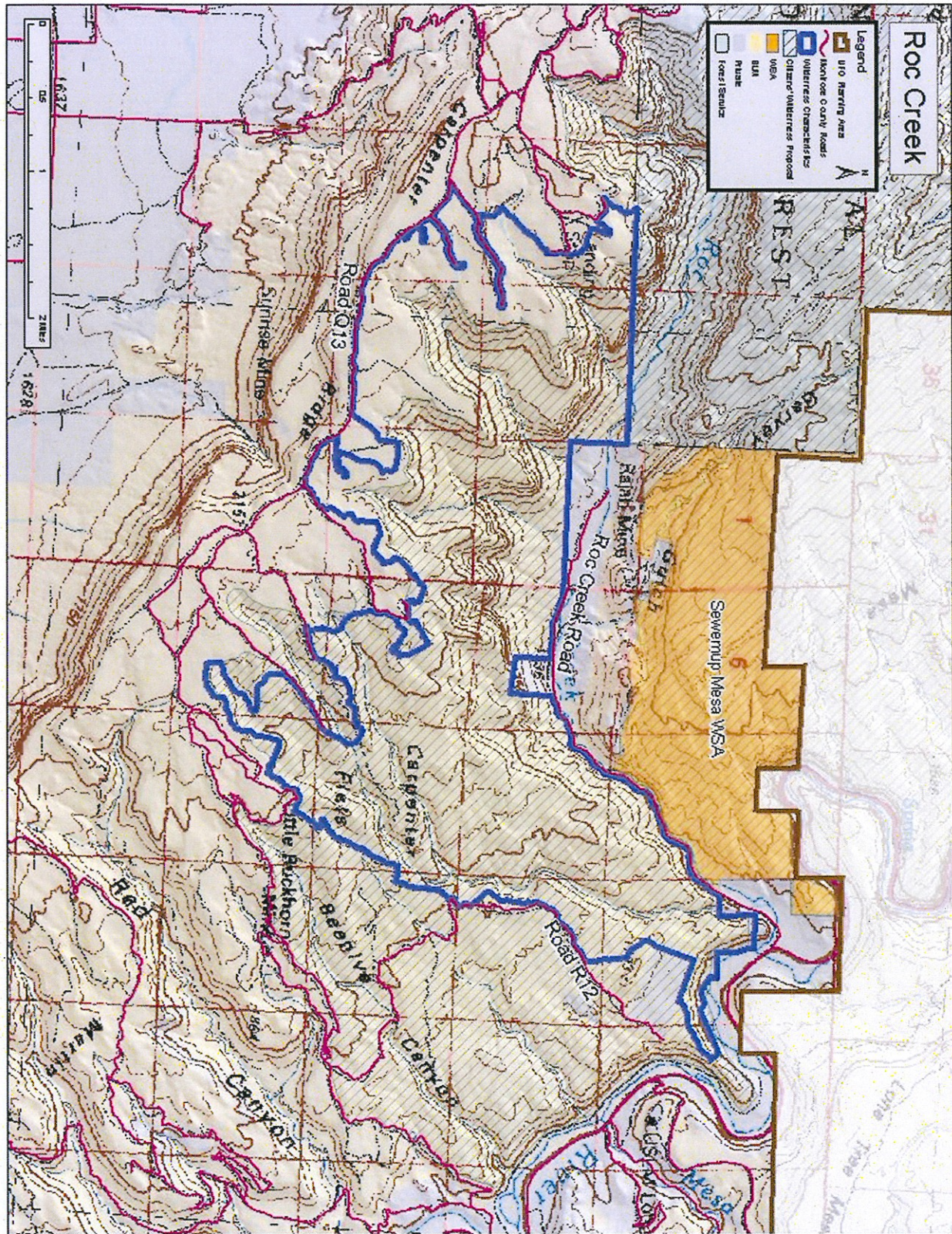


Figure 4 - Roc Creek



**ROC CREEK****Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics****Area Unique Identifier:** Roc Creek**Acreage:** 7,650

**(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception in the space provided below):**

Yes ☒No ☐**Description**

This unit is near, but not contiguous with, Sewemup Mesa WSA.

Unit is bounded as follows:

- on the east and northeast by private land and the Dolores River;
- on the north by private land, US Forest Service land, and Roc Creek Road;
- on the southwest, south and southeast by Montrose County Road Q13.

**(2) Does the area appear to be natural?**

Yes ☒No ☐N/A ☐**Description**

Of the original 7,650 acres inventoried, 5,480 acres are natural in appearance. The southeast part of the inventory unit in the upper Beehive Canyon/Carpenter Flats area contains many vehicle routes and linear disturbances remaining from mineral exploration. That part of the unit is not natural in appearance to a casual observer.

Within the remaining natural-appearing part of the unit there is an old vehicle route that enters from the southwest boundary, off of Montrose County Road S8, and continues in a northeast direction. The route shows signs of mechanical construction, but has been abandoned and unused for a number of years. Trees and brush are growing in the former route. Because it is neither used nor maintained, it does not meet the definition of "road" as defined for the purpose of this wilderness characteristics inventory. It is still quite noticeable to an observer walking along its route, but it is substantially unnoticeable from almost any other vantage point, and does not detract from the naturalness of the unit as a whole.

The south and southwest boundary of the remaining (natural appearing) acres of the unit is defined by Montrose County Road Q13 and several road spurs that have been "cherry-stemmed" out of the unit. While the lands inside the boundary appear to be natural, an observer has the feeling of being around several noticeable roads, especially when in the vicinity of the cherry-stems.



The main part of the unit is comprised primarily of steep terrain, draining toward the north into Roc Creek. Vegetation is predominantly pinyon-juniper forest.

**(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

**Description**

The unit is comprised primarily of rugged, steep topography and dense pinyon-juniper forest. Both the topography and vegetation provide excellent screening for an enhanced sense of solitude. It is also far from populated areas and receives very light recreational use. The unit is more than 90 road-miles from Moab, Grand Junction and Montrose. These factors combine to provide outstanding opportunities for solitude in the unit.

**(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

**Description**

The unit is only accessible by foot or on horseback, and has no recreational facilities.

The forested ridges and slopes leading into deep and rocky canyons form a landscape that is outstandingly suited to primitive and unconfined recreational activities, especially for those seeking self-directed and challenging hiking, backpacking, or horseback riding.

**(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value)?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

**Description**

The unit has highly scenic views from the bluffs overlooking the deep drainages within the unit.

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**SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS\***

**Area Unique Identifier:** Roc Creek

**Results of analysis:**

The original proposal from the Colorado Wilderness Network included Sewemup Mesa WSA and BLM lands in both Grand Junction and Uncompahgre field offices, as well as US Forest service lands in the Roc Creek vicinity. This inventory focuses on BLM lands outside of existing WSAs and designated wilderness, all within the Uncompahgre Field Office planning area.

The proposal within the Uncompahgre Field Office, exclusive of WSA acres comes to 7,650 acres of BLM lands. The adjacent US Forest Service lands were not considered because they are not administratively endorsed for wilderness protection.

250 acres on the west side of the remaining proposal were dropped because they were non-contiguous with the remainder of the unit.

An additional 2,170 acres around Beehive Canyon and the southern and eastern part of Carpenter Flats were dropped from consideration because they lack naturalness. Numerous vehicle routes create a network of unnatural disturbances in those areas. Montrose County Road R12 forms part of the boundary of the remaining Roc Creek wilderness characteristics unit.

The remaining unit is 5,480 acres in size.

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

**Check one:**

☒ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as lands with wilderness characteristics.

☐ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

**Prepared by (team members):**

Edd Franz, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner

Bruce Krickbaum, BLM Planner

Dean Stindt, BLM Range Management Specialist

Barbara Sharrow, BLM Uncompahgre Field Office Manager

Julie Jackson, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner

Barney Buria, BLM Environmental Protection Specialist

---

(Name, Title, Date)

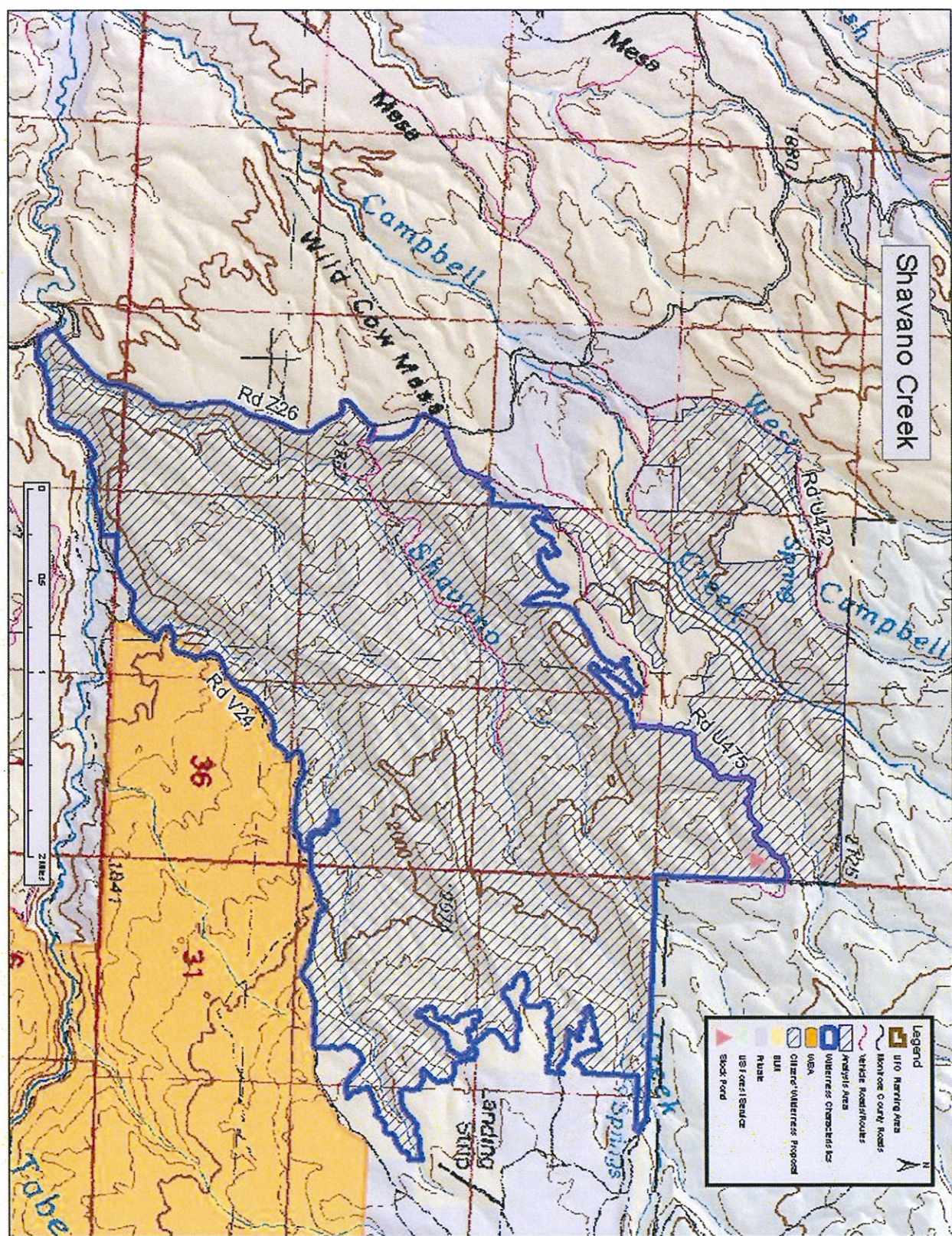
Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):

Name: Barbara Shaw Title: Field Manager

Date: Nov. 4, 2011

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### Figure 5 - Shavano Creek



## SHAVANO CREEK

### Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

**Area Unique Identifier:** Shavano Creek

**Acreage:** 6,090

**(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception in the space provided below):**

Yes ☒

No ☐

### Description

This unit is just north of the congressionally designated Tabeguache Area. They are separated by Montrose County Road V24, and therefore are not adjacent.

The unit is bounded as follows:

- On the south by Montrose County Road V24;
- On the east by vegetative manipulations (chaining/roller-chopping), private land and US Forest Service land;
- On the north by vegetative manipulations (chaining/roller-chopping), private land, and US Forest Service land; and
- On the west by Montrose County Roads Z26 and U472, and associated roadside disturbances.

The inventory included lands in upper Campbell Creek drainage north and west of Road U475 up to Road U472 in West Campbell Creek. During field inspection it was noted that Road U475 was originally mechanically constructed (likely by bulldozer), and since it provides the only access for maintenance of a stock pond, it will continue to be mechanically maintained. In 2004 the Campbell Creek Fire burned through the area. Now trees burnt in that fire are starting to drop across the road and will be cleared using chainsaws in order to continue to maintain the stock pond. Because of this, U475 meets the definition of "road" for the purpose of the wilderness characteristics inventory, and therefore the lands in upper Campbell Creek were not included in this unit.

There is a range access route that enters the unit from the west side off of Montrose County Road Z26. It runs northeast, adjacent to Shavano Creek, and terminates about 2.5 miles in. The route was mechanically constructed (likely by bulldozer), but is no longer used by full-size vehicles. There is evidence of some ATV use, likely for range-management and/or hunting purposes. There is no sign of mechanical maintenance of this route, and it is becoming an ATV trail rather than a full-size vehicle route. Since this route does not meet the definition of a "road" for the purposes of this wilderness characteristics inventory, it was left in the unit rather than being cherry-stemmed out.



A two mile long vehicle route enters the unit from Montrose County Road V24 along the southern boundary of the unit. Both ends of the route terminate at Road V24. The route was originally mechanically constructed (likely by bulldozer) but for the most part has not been maintained in many years. There is a stock pond which is accessed from the western terminus of the route about 0.3 miles in. The road is passable by full size vehicle to this point, and is maintained for access for pond maintenance. Other than that section the route has severely slumped and eroded to the point that it is impassable, even to an ATV. Therefore the only section that meets the wilderness characteristics definition of "road" is the western 0.3 miles. That section is cherry-stemmed out of the unit.

Even though the remainder of this unit is 4,900 acres (100 acres shy of the 5,000 acre minimum guideline) it is very close (98%), and is of sufficient size to make practicable its management in an unimpaired condition.

**(2) Does the area appear to be natural?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

**Description**

Although the unit does contain the two vehicle routes described under Question 1, neither is substantially noticeable in the unit as a whole. Where the ATV trail parallels Shavano Creek, it is clearly noticeable to an observer hiking in the drainage, but in the unit as a whole it is substantially unnoticeable.

The unit provides for important habitat continuity especially for seasonal wildlife migration. The upper end of the unit is around 7,000 feet in elevation and connects with even higher elevation forest lands on the Uncompahgre Plateau, while the lower end of the unit drains into Tabeguache Creek, which in turn connects with the San Miguel and Dolores Rivers.

Most of the unit is covered in pinyon-juniper forest, with some ponderosa pine in the upper reaches and cottonwoods and willows in the riparian areas of Shavano Creek. In 2004, the Campbell Creek wildfire burned through the upper reaches in the northeast portion of the unit. There are many standing-dead trees that were burnt in the fire, with a robust understory of grasses, forbs and sagebrush. Although it is obvious that a fire burned through that area, since wildfire is a natural phenomenon it is still natural in appearance.

**(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturallness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

**Description**

The unit lies in a remote, lightly populated area of western Colorado, far from metropolitan areas.

The topography is moderately steep throughout much of the unit. The exception being the upper reaches of the Campbell Canyon burn, which is gently undulating terrain.

Both the topography and rather dense pinyon-juniper forest provide ample screening for visitors to the area. The exception to this again is the Campbell Canyon burn area in the northeast portion of the unit, where there is not much in the way of either. Opportunities for solitude are outstanding throughout the unit, regardless of screening because visitation to the area is very light. This is partially due to the fact that road access along much of the boundary does not exist or goes through private property with locked gates.

Sights, sounds or evidence of other people are rare in this unit.

**(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

#### **Description**

There does not appear to be much recreational use of this area at all. The recreational use that does occur seems to be concentrated near the boundary roads. With its proximity to the more dramatic landscape and more dependable water sources of the Tabeguache Area, this area is unlikely to become a recreational destination.

There are no developed recreational facilities in the unit.

Except for the one ATV trail, all access to this unit is by non-motorized/non-mechanized means.

There are abundant opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. Opportunities for non-motorized/non-mechanized hunting in this unit are outstanding.

**(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value)?**

Yes ☒

No ☐

N/A ☐

#### **Description**

This area provides important habitat connectivity between the higher elevation forested lands on the Uncompahgre Plateau at the northeast end of the unit and the lower elevation lands to the southwest.

**SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS\*****Area Unique Identifier:** Shavano Creek**Results of analysis:**

This unit is just north of the congressionally designated Tabeguache Area. They are separated by Montrose County Road V24, and therefore are not adjacent.

1,190 acres were excluded from the initial inventory area when it was found that Road U475 is a constructed and maintained road, and therefore formed a new boundary for the unit. That left 4,900 acres that possess wilderness characteristics.

Even though the remainder of this unit is 100 acres shy of the 5,000 acre minimum guideline it is very close (98%), and is of sufficient size to make practicable its management in an unimpaired condition.

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

**Check one:**

☒ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as lands with wilderness characteristics.

☐ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

**Prepared by (team members):**

Edd Franz, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner  
 Bruce Krickbaum, BLM Planner  
 Dean Stindt, BLM Range Management Specialist  
 Barbara Sharrow, BLM Uncompahgre Field Office Manager  
 Julie Jackson, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner  
 Barney Buria, BLM Environmental Protection Specialist

**(Name, Title, Date)****Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):**

Name: Barbara Sharrow Title: Field Manager  
 Date: Nov. 4, 2011

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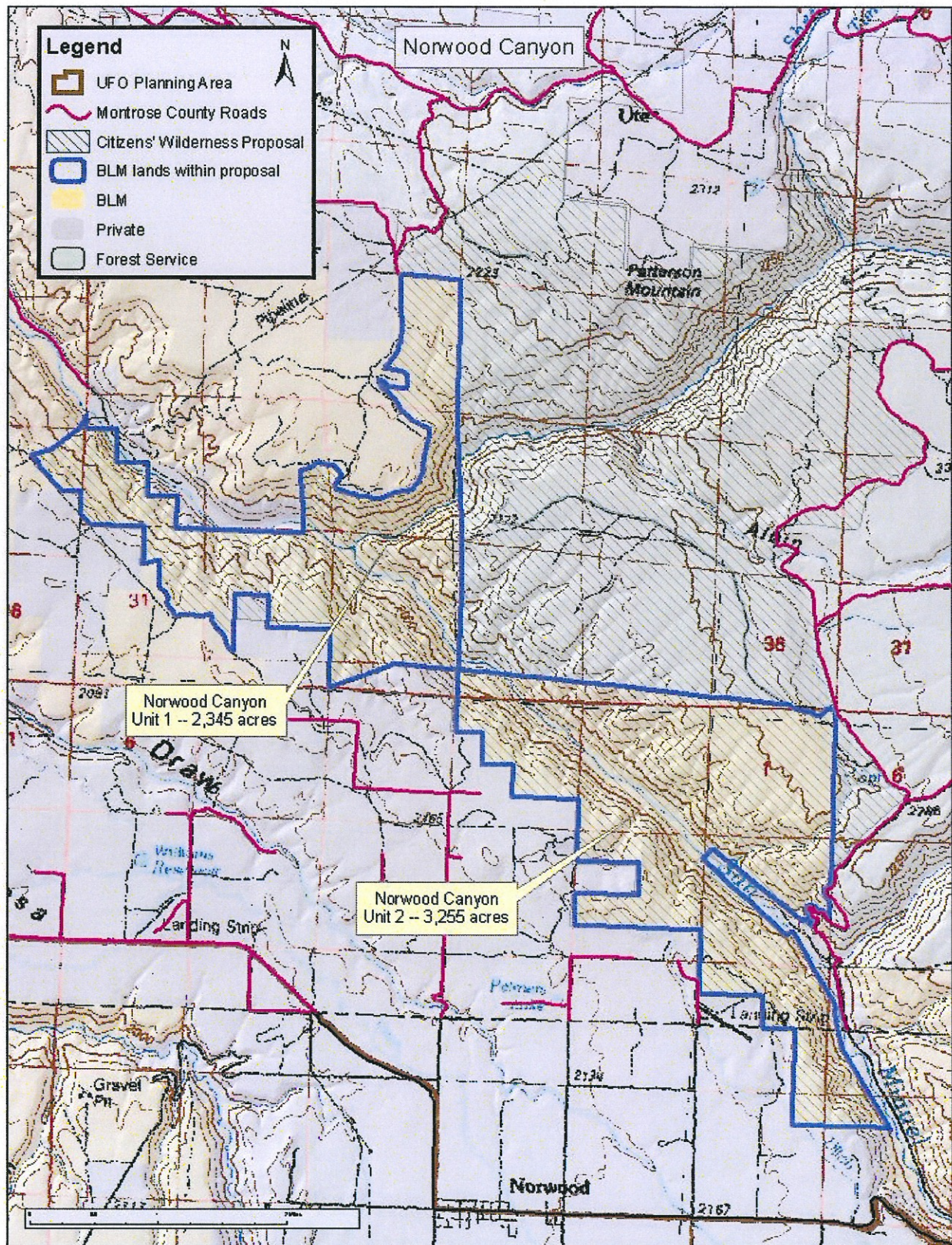


Figure 6 - Norwood Canyon



**NORWOOD CANYON****Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics****Area Unique Identifier:** Norwood Canyon**Acreage:** 5,600

**(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception in the space provided below):**

Yes ☐No ☒**Description**

The Colorado Wilderness Network proposal for the Norwood Canyon unit includes USFS lands. This wilderness characteristics inventory is limited to BLM lands within the RMP planning area. This constraint affects both the size and configuration (shape) of the unit.

Because at the approximate center of the BLM portion of the unit, the boundary constricts to a single point (see map below), this creates two separate, non-adjacent polygons, neither of which meets the minimum size requirement for BLM to continue analyzing them for wilderness characteristics. To meet size requirements an area must usually have 5,000 or more contiguous acres.

If the adjacent USFS lands that are included in the CWP were administratively endorsed by the USFS for wilderness protection, then we could have included those adjacent acres as part of the size analysis. Because those lands have no special status or recommendation from the USFS for wilderness protection, they cannot be included in the BLM analysis.

**(2) Does the area appear to be natural?**

Yes ☐No ☐N/A ☒

Note: If "No" is checked, then the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "NA" for the remaining questions below.

**Description**

**(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?**

Yes ☐No ☐N/A ☒**Description**

---

**(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remainder is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?**

Yes ☐No ☐N/A ☒

Note: If "No" is checked for both 3 and 4, then the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "NA" for question 5.

**Description**

**(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value)?**

Yes ☐No ☐N/A ☒

**Description**

---

**SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS\***

**Area Unique Identifier:** Norwood Canyon

**Results of analysis:**

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☐ Yes ☒ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ N/A

**Check one:**

☐ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as lands with wilderness characteristics.

☒ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

**Prepared by (team members):**

Edd Franz, BLM Outdoor Recreation Planner

**(Name, Title, Date)**

**Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):**

Name: Barbara Shaw Title: Field Manager

Date: Nov. 4, 2011

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